Following is an executive summary of presentations from University and economic development partnership representatives and input provided by invited business leaders as part of the 2012 UNC System strategic planning process.

Top Regional Development Priorities
In the RTRP region, targeted clusters for development (retention/expansion/recruitment and startup) include: advanced analytics, advanced medical care, agriculture biotechnology, analytical instrumentation, biological agents and infectious diseases, cleantech, defense technologies, informatics, interactive gaming and e-learning, nanoscale technologies, pervasive computing, and pharmaceuticals. Active initiatives are focused on cleantech business & industry with RTRP staff assignment. RTRP also stressed ways in which higher education resources serve as major assets for economic development including international recruitment of organizations (“triple helix” advantage—business, government, universities).

Top hard skills (degree programs/technical skills) needed from UNC campuses over the next five years
Technical talent in identified clusters; international business degrees; STEM related master and PhD programs; “integrated” specialties needed to run a business (finance, accounting, marketing, supply chain management, HR); teach functions in “integrated” way so language of each can be understood—intersection in “white space” areas; recruit masters students to stay in region; engineering and sciences (biological, software, electrical, agricultural/biotech, chemical, polymer); hands-on/practical experience for students; mentorships, internships.

Top soft skills (global/creative/entrepreneurial) needed from UNC campuses over the next five years
“The ‘softer’ the skillset the more important collaboration with industry. A lot of these things you can read in a book, but you need to actually do them in the workplace.”
Appreciation for multi-cultural/international travel/geopolitical knowledge/speak foreign languages; project management; critical thinking; written/oral/communication/negotiation; how to work in industry (motivational skills); on-campus engagement in entrepreneurial enterprise; teamwork; advanced leadership; “real world” internships (cross-functional); entrepreneurial/intrapreneurial mindset (“Not everyone is going to come out and start their own business. We need people who can come out and be entrepreneurial for us.”)
“Working skills’ are really important. How do you talk to a colleague; how do you work on a team.”
“Any experience universities can give people with a foreign language, experience overseas or project management skills.”

How the University help you grow business and/or communicate about business needs and interests
“Triangle universities need to have skills in more than just ‘their’ field. A polymer scientist needs to understand how a biologist thinks. The degrees are just so siloed. The greatest opportunities come from the white space areas.”
Protect/promote reputation of university; more online; university-based service centers (access); national centers of excellence (cluster focus); research the next thing; affordable assistance to business; degree/certificate programs for professional growth; streamline tech transfer; pay-per-use facilities/equipment (e.g., NCSU electron microscope).
“We can come up with 100 million reasons why not to do a tech transfer deal; we’re really good at that. Why don’t we keep tech transfer simple and move as much stuff out as possible and get some real successes?”

University Communication: Have staff (point of contact) focused on marketing/business development so they can respond to business; have list of clusters/industries (like ICE @ UVA—project based); conduct focus groups (like this one) with industry; tools like REACH NC (increase awareness); have more “push” or proactive communication.

What is your “one great idea” on the best ways the university can help businesses be successful?
Every university should be “best in the world” at something; have relationship with specific department for industry collaboration/research/projects/recruitment; make RTP the caterer for “personalized medicine” and “companion diagnostics;” seek industry partners for gov’t funded research; create program to rotate students through different companies.